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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Women's Board Educational Cooperation Society, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

The issue of women having the same rights as men and being empowered to claim them, as it relates to the achievement of the internationally agreed goals and commitments, is very relevant to Nigeria. The size of the female population is almost the same as that of the male; and developing women's rights is at the heart of achieving development.

This year marks the tenth and fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, respectively. The situation on the ground is far from the landmark expected. Goals 2 and 3 focus on women's empowerment. There is no empowerment that is not based on education. Looking at the figures posted on the Millennium Development Goals Indicators website (www.mdgs.un.org, accessed in July 2009), we read that the net enrolment of children in primary school is just 65.2 per cent of the total number of children; 61 per cent of the total population of girls enrol in primary school, while the figure for boys is 69.3 per cent.

The same source reports that the gender disparity index in secondary school enrolment is 0.81; although the proportion is not much higher than in primary school, it shows the predominance of boys attending school.

Girls living in rural areas suffer more as most of the time they are not favoured when a choice has to be made owing to lack of funds as to whom to enrol. Often, parents in such cases send the girls to towns and cities to stay with people who offer to train them in exchange for help with housework; unfortunately, these people often do not keep their promise.

It is vital to remove barriers, such as financial constraints (cost of books, uniforms and transport), cultural practices and traditional beliefs, that prevent the girl child from receiving the minimum standards of a good education.